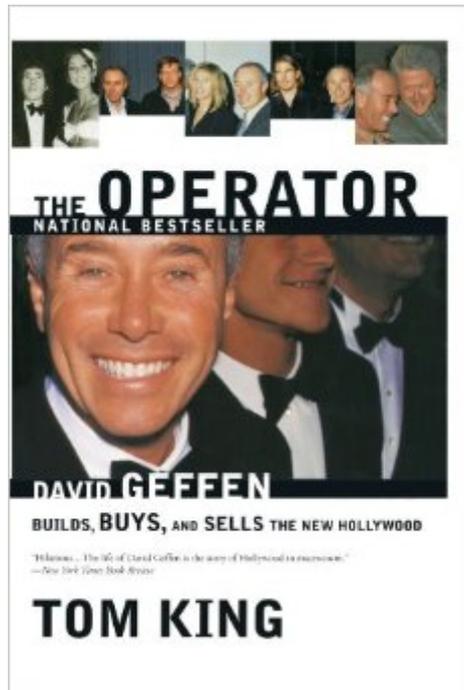


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The Operator: David Geffen Builds, Buys, And Sells The New Hollywood



Synopsis

“A crazy American epic” • “NewsweekComplex, contentious, and blessed with the perfect-pitch ability to find the next big talent, David Geffen has shaped American popular culture and transformed the way Hollywood does business. His dazzling career has included the roles of power agent, record-industry mogul, Broadway producer, and billionaire Hollywood studio founder” but from the beginning his accomplishments have been shadowed by the ruthlessness with which he has pursued fame, money, and power. With *The Operator*, Tom King “who interviewed Geffen for the book and had unimpeded access to his circle of intimates” presents a mesmerizing chronicle of Geffen’s meteoric rise from the mailroom at William Morris, as well as a captivating tour of thirty sizzling years of Hollywood history. Drawing on the recollections of celebrities such as Tom Cruise, Yoko Ono, Warren Beatty, Courtney Love, Paul Simon, and even Cher (whom Geffen nearly married), *The Operator* transports readers to a world that is as ruthless as it is dazzling, revealing a great American story about success and the bargains made for it. “A detailed portrait of Hollywood’s premier manipulator” [The Operator is as much a composite portrait of the “New Hollywood” as it is of the fifty-seven-year-old partner in DreamWorks SKG.] • “San Francisco Chronicle” illuminating...[The Operator] shows how raging ambition and chutzpah are as much valued as talent “or more so” in determining success. • “Philadelphia Inquirer

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Customer Reviews

"The Operator" makes for compelling reading. King has done a tremendous job of capturing a frightening time in Hollywood, and showing readers what made it so frightening. This book is not just

about Geffen but about all the lives he touched, helped and often ruined. Some of the icons of the 80s and 90s figure powerfully into this story--The Eagles, Neil Young, Michael Eisner, Spielberg, Katzenberg and Nirvana. King's portrait of a man who was not afraid to burn bridges, betray his mentors, and ingratiate himself with people he loathed is a classic tale of the lonely but powerful maverick who has great skills but also severe character flaws. The tragedy of Geffen is that there is much to admire in this man, but it is impossible to overlook the pain he caused so many people who were apparently loyal to him. The book is balanced; I understand why Geffen is upset by the book but I think an objective reader comes away with equal measures of fear and respect for the man. In a sense I think King has done Geffen a favor by allowing readers a glimpse of the human component behind the wealth and power. There is no excuse for some of the things Geffen has done, but there is a reason: without psychoanalyzing Geffen, King manages to infer a climate, and provide contour to this man's psyche, that would permit a successful man to behave, at times, with such impunity and disregard for the well being of others. The question at the core of this existential puzzle is: Why would a self-made man with everything do more harm than good? In this book Spielberg is portrayed as a man at the opposite end of the spectrum: a man who is grateful for his success, indebted to the people who helped him achieve it, satisfied with the money he has made, and eager to give something in return. The richer Geffen became, the more good he did, but it is confounding that he hurt so many people in the process, not because they offended him personally but because they sought to be as good at dealmaking as he was. Geffen's most disturbing trait as relayed in this book is his willingness to sabotage the careers of others by manufacturing toxic and unfounded rumors. What is touching is that Geffen seems at points to realize that his best traits are undermined by his worst traits--greed and a vengeful spirit--but seems at a loss to change his behavior. There is a move towards redemption in the final portion of this book, but it is hard to gauge its sincerity. King is a spectacular journalist and I hope he writes more biographies. My only criticisms are that 1) the last fifth of this long book is the weakest portion, not owing to King's prose but simply to the fact that that Geffen's life became less interesting after he sold Geffen, and 2) the book feels as if large sections of the manuscript were omitted, perhaps for legal or length reasons. I would love to see what King left on the cutting room floor. The story of David Geffen is not yet finished and, like Michael Milken, his third act could be a spectacular feat of personal redemption. I think this book sits alongside "Wired," "Outrageous Conduct" and "High Concept" as a truly important book about a watershed but ultimately frightening period for Hollywood.

This excellent biography well researched and beautifully written has but one flaw: the subject. David

Geffen is so contradictory, no matter how much information about him is amassed; we are still baffled. In keeping with the rest of his personality, I understand this book was "partially" authorized. That is, when Mr. King began the project, DG was forthcoming and enthusiastic, only to totally reverse himself later on and be bitterly opposed to the undertaking. David Geffen is a poster boy for ADD. He is frenetically active, but with a remarkably short attention span. He disliked school because it wasted his time. He can be a caring friend or an implacable enemy. He can be embarrassing intimate with almost complete strangers, yet distant as a north star toward his own family. He has lived a gay promiscuous life, yet fell hard for Cher and wanted to marry her. Easy going Cher recognized him as a "controller" and walked away. He shows great generosity personally and publicly; yet hasn't a qualm about financially ruining friend and foe alike for a perceived slight, and sometimes just for the hell of it. No matter how much you thank your lucky stars that you never, ever have to do business with David Geffen, you cannot help but be awestruck at his genius as a businessman, visualizer and strategist. He is beyond compare, and in spite of Mr. King's admirable dissecting of various business deals, it is impossible to follow Geffen's leap of ideas and creativity to make things happen. In spite of David Geffen's striving for the most money, the best deal, and the top of the financial ladder, I would not call him a materialistic man. Unfortunately for him, he doesn't feel an emotional bond to his beautiful artwork and homes. Name him a good price and he will sell it to you--as is. He has never had a sustained relationship, and now going on his 60th year, he has everything but someone to leave it to. "The Operator" is a meticulous undertaking, and Mr. King has an easy writing style that is very balanced toward his multi-sided subject. I will look for other books by this author. A very enjoyable read.

I found King to be an intelligent and thorough writer. His writing keeps you glued to the page with anecdotes and suggested images to fill in the gaps. Direct writing with good facts makes this book a must read for anyone in the music and entertainment business. Geffen is a legend who has not yet peaked. His struggle with his class background and achievement is on par with people such as Andrew Carnegie, and Cornelius Vanderbilt. To dismiss Geffen as a cheap opportunist and a hustler would be missing the point of this man's life and King's book. The story is compelling, the facts are clear, and Geffen is still in the press. Love him or hate him, if you don't know about the man, you can't know about the entertainment business. Right on "KING DAVID".

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